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# *s haunted* Chemical *tors testify* blast—then trip on I-5



By Solveig Torvik  
P-I Reporter

A barrel containing waste paint solvents from Lockheed Shipyards exploded in Edmonds early yesterday afternoon "with a loud roar and a big boom."

The flatbed truck carrying the waste cargo was parked a block from the 300-pupil Westgate School. Some of the children heard the boom and smelled something like fresh paint, said their principal, John Samples.

Driver Gordon Brougher, who was knocked down by the impact of the "deafening" explosion, saw a "reddish cloud" go over his head. He took a quick look at the other 75 drums aboard, some of which contained cyanide, freon and electroplating wastes.

He said three other drums were bulging.

He drove the truck from his house in the 9700 block of 220th Southwest Street, where it was parked, and down Interstate 5 to Pier 91, where his chemical waste transportation company, Resource Recovery and Chemical Processors Inc., is located.

Brougher said that he called his dispatcher on the truck's two-way radio to notify him of the problem, after he called God.

"I'll be 43 in June and I want to live to see it," he said.

But no one called the state patrol to alert it to the explosive cargo heading down the freeway, according to company officials.

And the Seattle Fire Department wasn't notified of the potential trouble until after the truck arrived at Pier 91.

Seattle Deputy Fire Chief R.B. Bower, head of the hazardous materials team, said, "Perhaps it would have been better to notify the Edmonds Fire Department" than to drive the truck, in danger of another explosion, through freeway traffic to Pier 91.

Bower said that at the time the driver made the decision to take the truck on the freeway to Seattle, Brougher did not know whether there was going to be another explosion. "We could have had other drums blow up" on the freeway, Bower said.

But Brougher, who has been driving hazardous wastes for six years, and his superiors defended his "judgment call" to take the truck on the freeway.

The fire department's hazardous materials team quickly sealed off the area and evacuated some two dozen persons within a 300-yard radius of the truck. Then, at first unsure of what chemicals were aboard and what might happen next, they hosed down the drums with water in hopes of cooling them down. A crew from Resource Recovery climbed aboard the truck and pried loose the seals to check the pressure in all the drums.

## No interaction

There were no more explosions and no injuries in the incident. The damaged drums were repacked in larger containers.

John Kimberly, president of Resource Recovery, said there never was any danger that the whole load of chemicals would blow up in a chain reaction because they would not interact that way. The cyanide was in solid form, he added.

And he said that the driver made the right choice to bring the truck to

Man killed